



## New Big Brother, Big Sisters NYC youth mentoring program links kids with police officers



THE BRONX—It's not something you see a lot in this part of the Bronx.

Teens and police officers, talking and laughing together.

For many of these kids, they've been raised with a negative view of the NYPD.

"I've seen like the TV and this and that. I've seen them like doing bad things," one student named David said.

That outlook is exactly what the new Bigs in Blue program is hoping to change.

8th graders from I.S. 218 are the first ones involved in this new mentorship program.

They've been paired up with officers from the 44th precinct and the kids quickly learned, they are much more than a badge and uniform.

"They're just like us, they're not bad people. They're just trying to do their job," David said.

The relationships they've been building have shifted their view of police and created a bond and trust on both sides.

David, who wants to be a marine, connected with one detective who already served our country.

"He told me he's proud of me that I chose this decision out of any thing else anything else I could have chosen. He really inspired me to keep moving on, join the marines and serve my country," he said.

"I think what the officers have learned, they're very surprised to know how insightful the kids can be and how much information they have," Maria Barahona, Community Based Director at BBBS of NYC, said.

"This program, Bigs in Blue is providing an opportunity for our police officers to connect with kids on a different level. Help them look at some future goals talk to them about what it means to be a positive community member and essentially make sure that they're there to see and guide them to a positive outcome in their lives," Michael Coughlin, Chief Program Officer at BBBS of NYC, explained.

Big Brother, Big Sisters of NYC says 99% of the kids in its programs graduate high school and 93% go on to college.

They're hoping the success continues as they expand the Bigs in Blue program into other NYC middle schools.

"It's the impact of one individual taking the time to care about somebody else, and provide guidance and help and support that can make all the difference in the world," Coughlin said.

For more info on BBBS of NYC programs, click here.

**Story + video:** <http://pix11.com/2018/04/09/new-big-brother-big-sisters-nyc-youth-mentoring-program-links-kids-with-police-officers/>